

# Ancient Eden

ISSUE 1 Summer 1998 Newsletter of the Appleby Archaeology Group

## Editorial

Appleby Archaeology Group came into being in January this year. Its aims were to:

1) Promote a better understanding of the past and the role of archaeology (through talks, visits and teaching activities)

2) Provide the opportunity to take part in archaeology at an amateur level.

I hope we are well on the way to fulfilling the first objective. Our first two meetings were well attended and I want to thank both Andrew Pierce and Mike Daniels for their support and participation. Those who were unable to attend last month missed an enlightening talk about the current state of archaeology in Cumbria which was followed by lively discussion regarding recent developments at the site of the Appleby Friary. Despite some heated moments Mr. Daniels admitted to me afterwards that he had enjoyed the evening and much preferred it to some meetings he had been to which were quite dull in comparison! Events for the summer are included on page 3.

In order to address the second objective there will be a meeting in June for any members interested in helping with our own research projects (see below). This may initially involve a parish survey but ultimately include the excavation of selected sites. No previous experience is necessary in

order to take part. (For those who do not wish to take part in research there will be a bulletin included with future editions of this newsletter in order to keep you up to date.)

I am pleased to announce that Cumbria County Council has agreed to support our group with a grant of £100. This was recommended by the Upper Eden Neighbourhood Forum and will help with our setting up costs and expenses for the first six months.

Membership continues to grow and there is a lot of interest in our activities from the wider public. Long term success of any group however, depends to a large extent on the participation of its members. With this in mind I include details of the library scheme for those members who have books they are willing to loan. Also please send letters, questions, ideas or requests to me at the address on the back page.

Anyone who has an interest or theory they would like to share might consider writing a short piece for inclusion in future editions of this newsletter. It does not have to be professionally produced but please include illustrations and references where possible.

On the back page you will find information about a local site which is worth a visit. If you know of a place that you would like to share with other members then please send details to me as this may well become a regular feature. (An idea borrowed from CBA North magazine). Perhaps it will develop into a field trip, or who knows, even an excavation...

Martin Railton

### Research Group Meeting

At the first meeting we will discuss the possibilities for archaeological research in and around Appleby.

Meet 7.00pm at the Crown & Cushion, Appleby Market Place  
Monday 15th June

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# EDEN'S FIRST ARTISTS?

## *Prehistoric Rock Art in the Eden Valley*

*If you have visited Long Meg and Her Daughters stone circle you may have noticed the spirals carved on the tallest stone. These designs were carved by our prehistoric ancestors over 4,000 years ago. What are they doing there and what do they mean?*

### Rock Art in Britain

Prehistoric rock art occurs in Britain from around 3,200BC. The simplest designs are known as 'cup marks' (hollows cut into the stone surface often surrounded by rings). They are mostly found on natural outcrops and boulders, most commonly in Scotland and Northern England. Rock art also occurs on the slabs of Neolithic (New Stone Age) chambered tombs, particularly in Ireland within the passage graves of the Boyne Valley. These designs consist of 'cup marks', rings, spirals, lozenge shapes and zig-zag designs. Similar motifs are found widely in Britain from around 2,500BC.

### Cumbrian Rock Art

Examples of rock art in Cumbria are fairly scattered but the majority occur in the Eden Valley where it can be found on standing stones, isolated boulders and within funerary monuments.

Long Meg and Her Daughters is the largest stone circle in Cumbria. The tallest stone (Long Meg) stands outside the south-west entrance to the circle, taller than any other stone by 1.2m. It is also noticeable by the spiral

and concentric rings carved into its surface which is quite unique. Only one other stone circle outside Cumbria has such designs (Templewood stone circle in Argyll). Long Meg is also important because it marks the setting of the Midwinter sun when viewed from the center of the circle.

Similar carvings exist on Little Meg 500m away, and at the Glassonby Circle. The latter consists of 30 stones which once enclosed a burial cairn of an Early Bronze Age date (approx. 2,000BC onwards). The inner face of one stone is carved with three sets of concentric rings.

In 1880 a rock-cut cist (burial chamber) was uncovered by accident at Redhills near Penrith. Covering it was a limestone slab. The upper surface was scarred by ploughing but the lower surface was intact and carved with 'cup marks', rings and grooves (see right). Similarly marked stones were also recovered from a cist inside Little Meg (now in Penrith museum).

In 1892 workmen discovered three carved slabs at Old Parks Tumulus, Kirkoswald. These were carved with an unusual design including 'cup marks' rings and long fronds or spirals (now on display in Tullie

House museum)

### Nature and Function

We can deduce from these examples that the art had profound significance to Neolithic and Bronze Age people. The carvings on a large ceremonial monument like Long Meg suggest that it had a sacred purpose. The location of rock art on the Midwinter marker stone suggests that these spirals and rings may have had some connection to the circle of the year, or life and death. Perhaps they were symbolically important to prehistoric people, as the cross is to Christians today. It is significant that the designs were chosen to be incorporated into burial monuments. However many of the slabs from such sites appear to be broken as if reused from an earlier site.

A stone found at Honeypots Farm near Edenhall may provide a clue. In 1909 a whinstone boulder was discovered on a high scar above the river Eamont. The boulder is carved on its smooth surface with numerous cup-and-ring marks enclosed within a large oval shape (see right). Two similar boulders with cup-and-ring marks stand near Hallbankgate at the edge of the fells.

It seems that decorated boulders were used in prehistory to mark significant places in the landscape. Richard Bradley who has studied cup-and-ring marked stones in some detail notes that they are frequently found at boundary locations; between wild and cultivated lands and on the edges of 'ritual landscapes'. In Cumbria we find rock art marking the edge of 'sacred space' at Long Meg and Her Daughters and the boundary between the living and the dead in burial cairns of the Bronze Age.

### Conclusions

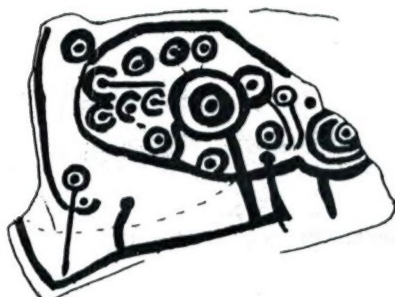
We cannot know for certain what prehistoric artists intended when they



*Long Meg and two entrance stones, Little Salkeld*



# Group News



*The Honeypots Farm Stone*

carved stones with spirals, cups and rings. However the art seems to have been used in the Neolithic to emphasize special places in the landscape and to define sacred space. The designs also held an important meaning to people of the Early Bronze Age who chose to incorporate them into the burial monuments of important individuals, perhaps reusing the stones of earlier ancestors to validate their claim on the land. Whatever the precise meaning of these designs, 4,000 years later they continue to fascinate.

## Illustrative Sources

Frodsham, N.K. 1989, *Gazetteer of Megalithic Carvings in Cumbria*, TCWAAS 89

Taylor, M.W. 1883, *A cup-marked stone found at Redhills*, TCWAAS 6



*Slab from Redhills*

## Roman Summer

Many members showed an interest in the Romans when completing their membership forms. Therefore several events this summer will be focusing on this period: Mike McCarthy from the Carlisle archeological unit will be giving a talk in June about his excavations there. In August there will be a rare opportunity to handle some Roman artefacts at Tullie House museum; and a trip to Hadrian's wall in July will include visits to a Roman temple, forts, milecastles and (weather permitting) a tour of the excavations at Vindolanda. (Please note that there will be a charge for these two events and places are limited. A booking form is included with this newsletter).

## Lancaster Archaeology Unit

The Director of the Lancaster Archaeology Unit, Richard Newman has agreed to talk to our group in July. The Lancaster unit is responsible for most of the research carried out in our area and includes recent work at Kendal Castle.

## Archaeology Evening Class

There will be a ten week introduction to archaeology starting at the Appleby Grammar School in September. The course will run on Wednesday evenings and is aimed at the beginner. It will cover archaeological theory, survey, excavation techniques and much more! Enrolment will be through the Appleby Adult Education office at the Grammar School at the start of the new term.

## Associated Organisations

Appleby Archaeology group is a member of the **Cumbria Local History Federation**, which aims to encourage and help local societies and individuals involved in local history.

It publishes a regular Bulletin, and a Diary with details of meetings held by member societies. If you would like to receive a copy of these contact Martin.

The **Council for Independent Archaeology** is a national organisation which offers help and advice to

amateur archaeologists and local societies. They can also help to put volunteer diggers in touch with excavations nationwide. (More details are available on request).

For younger members the **Council for British Archaeology (CBA)** runs a **Young Archaeologists' Club** which is open to all 9-16 year olds. The nearest branch is at Kendal where they hold regular meetings and activities. In May and June they will be creating a museum display on the Romans. (Romans again!) Contact Kendal Museum for details. Tel 01539 721374

If anyone has any queries regarding archaeology or needs help or advice please get in touch.

## Data protection

Membership details will be kept on a personal computer unless any member objects to this (ie Name, Address, Telephone Number and subscription details)

No personal details will be passed to other organisations without permission from members. If you object to your details being kept on a computer, please let Martin know and they will be kept on paper.

## Requests

Does anyone know about Geology? Mrs Hall of Appleby found a piece of stone some years ago which she thinks may be part of a stalagmite or stalagmite. She would like very much to know what it is. If anyone can help identify it please contact Martin to arrange a visit (as she can no longer leave the house).

## Time Team in Cumbria

Channel 4's Time Team visited West Cumbria in March this year and spent a weekend filming at a Roman site in Papcastle. The results of their excavation should be broadcast in the autumn.



# SITES TO VISIT: Industrial Heritage

## *Hilton and Murton Lead Mines*

Enjoy a walk on the fellside this summer and take in some spectacular views of the Eden Valley. You can include some archaeology too with a visit to one of these sites, which are potent reminders of our industrial past.

### **Scordale Mines, Hilton**

Location: NY762227

*Park at the top of Hilton village. A public right of way follows Hilton Beck up the valley to the mine. Scordale mine lies 2 miles from the gate. The area lies within the boundary of the MoD training area so do check that there is no firing on the day of your visit.*

It is possible that the Romans first used these mines in order to produce metal for lead seals and pay coffer for the soldiers. Large Scale mining was established here in 1820 by the London Lead Company (also known as the Quaker Lead Company). This led to a major transformation for Hilton, from a small settlement into a village with piped water supply, bake ovens, a wash house and a school. Approaching the mine you can see the remains of the 'shop', a rectangular building which provided accommodation for eight young lads. They stayed there for the week, looked after by the 'minder'. The lowest entrance of the mine was the

horse level and has a masoned arch. From there mining was carried out upwards to a flat level.

Material was emptied into small trucks and taken by horse to be sorted. Once cleaned and separated the lead ore (galena) was taken down to the smelt mill at Hilton.

The period of maximum productivity was between 1820 and 1880. Toward the end of the nineteenth century the price of lead fell sharply due to imports of cheaper American ore. As the industry declined so too did the population across the northern Pennines. In 1882 barytes and fluorspar were mined in Scordale, minerals which had previously been thrown away as having no commercial value (Baryte is used in the manufacture of paint and paper whilst Fluorspar can be used in the manufacture of pottery and other industrial

processes). Pieces of these can still be found around the site. This extended the life of the mine until its closure in 1952.

### **Murton Mine**

Location: NY742225

*Park at the top of Murton Village by the fell gate. Follow the track to the right, over a stile and across the stream. A public footpath crosses this field to a gate at the top. The mine is on the slope below you as you walk along the left of Mell Fell. (Please keep dogs on a lead when visiting this site as you have to cross enclosed farmland)*

Murton mine is on a smaller scale than Scordale but has all the elements of nineteenth century lead mining including substantial spoil heaps, the remains of a site hut and several furnaces for roasting the ore.

There are two mine entrances with masoned arches which lead some way into the hillside. The upper mine shaft has a flagged central path, for barrowing ore.

Left: Murton Mine entrance



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